

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL SERVICES DIVISION
STATE PROCUREMENT BUREAU

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
EVALUATION PROCESS – INSTRUCTIONS**

Please refer to your copy of the RFP as a guide to the scoring process for each proposal.

NON-CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: Once the proposals have been received and it is clear which individuals and/or companies have responded to the RFP, each member of the evaluation committee will be provided with a Declaration Form by the evaluation committee chairperson or the procurement officer. This form contains information explaining what would constitute a potential conflict of interest and that certain documents received as part of an RFP may be protected from public view under the provisions of section 18-4-304, MCA. The procurement officer will inform evaluation committee members if any documents received are protected from public view under the statute. If such documents are present, the Declaration Form will explain the responsibility of the evaluation committee members to maintain the confidentiality of these documents during and after the RFP evaluation process. The procurement officer will collect the signed Declaration Forms for inclusion in the official procurement file.

INDIVIDUAL SCORING: Evaluation committee members are provided with copies of each RFP to begin their individual review of the proposals.

Step One: *Review all proposals.* Take notes, make comments or prepare questions for discussion. Do not score at this point.

Step Two: *Determine status.* Make an initial determination as to whether each proposal is "responsive" or "non-responsive." A "responsive" proposal conforms in all material respects to the RFP. A proposal may be deemed "non-responsive" if any of the required information is not provided, the submitted price is found to be excessive or inadequate as measured by criteria stated in the RFP, or the proposal is clearly not within the scope of the project described and required in the RFP. *Extreme care should be used when making this decision because of the time and cost that an offeror has put into submitting a proposal.* If a proposal is determined to be "non-responsive," it will not be considered further. The procurement officer will make the final determination of responsiveness. If a determination of non-responsiveness is made, written justification must be provided for this conclusion.

Step Three: *Score proposals.* Committee members should INDIVIDUALLY score the proposals based on the criteria established in the RFP. Proposals must be evaluated solely on the stated criteria listed in the RFP. Only material presented in the written proposals and vendor demonstrations can be considered in the evaluation. *Prior documented experience and past performance history with the product and/or offeror may be considered as part of the reference checking process if it is available to the entire evaluation committee.* Include a written justification for each scoring category. An approved scoring sheet/evaluation matrix will be provided to assist you in the process of awarding and totaling points. Evaluation committee members MAY NOT meet to discuss their scores, as a meeting of the committee must be publicly noticed. Advice may be sought from experts in the field, however, each

committee member must take responsibility for his/her own score. If the evaluation committee wishes to meet to discuss the responses, and/or to arrive at a final score, the meeting must be adequately noticed pursuant to the paragraph below.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS: Once the proposals have been evaluated and scored by individual committee members, the entire committee may meet to discuss the proposals and arrive at the final scoring. All meetings involving the evaluation of RFPs are open to the public and subject to the open meeting laws. These meetings must be posted electronically on the General Services Division website, <http://svc.mt.gov/gsd/Onestop/meetingdefault.aspx>, 72 hours in advance. The meetings must take place in an ADA accessible location and members of the public are welcome to attend. However, the public may not participate in the evaluation process or offer any comments. When sections of the proposals involving trade secrets or statutorily protected confidential materials are discussed, the meeting must be temporarily closed to the public. Pursuant to state law, 2-3-212, MCA, the committee chairperson, or assigned designee, must take minutes of each meeting. These minutes must include the date, time, place of meeting, a list of the evaluation committee members in attendance, as well as the substance of all matters discussed or decided and, at the request of any evaluation committee member, a record by individual members of any votes taken. *These minutes will become part of the permanent procurement file.* In addition, a quorum of the committee must be present to take any official action.

Step Four: *Discuss proposals.* The full evaluation committee should discuss all aspects of the proposals so that there is a “unified understanding” of the criteria and corresponding responses. Individual scores may be adjusted at this point based upon discussion. The committee may tally the final point assignments by the following methods: (1) consensus score, (2) a total of all of the points given by individual committee members, or (3) an average of the individual scores. Any method or combination thereof is acceptable.

Step Five: *Interview.* This step is optional. If interviews are deemed necessary, the procurement officer will issue a letter asking the offeror to attend the interview or give a presentation. This is an opportunity for both sides to explain their viewpoints. If an oral interview is pursued as an option, it must be so stated in the RFP and scored according to stated criteria.

Step Six: *Discussion/Negotiation.* This step is also optional. If the committee is unsure of certain items or issues included in an RFP response, it may request further clarification from the offeror. The procurement officer will distribute clarification questions. Responses will be returned to the procurement officer and submitted to the evaluation committee.

Step Seven: *Best and Final Offer.* This is optional. A letter asking the offeror to submit a “Best and Final Offer” may be issued by the procurement officer at the request of the evaluation committee. Once a “Best and Final Offer” is received, the committee will evaluate it in the same manner as the original proposal. Unless the RFP so states, a “Best and Final Offer” may not be requested from the offeror on price alone.

Step Eight: *Recommendation.* The full evaluation committee makes a written recommendation as to whom the contract should be awarded. This written recommendation should contain scores, justification and rationale for the decision, along with any other variables that may have been considered. If scoring methods (2) or (3) are used, as noted in above in Step 4, individual scoring sheets must be provided to the procurement officer at the end of the evaluation process. If consensus scoring is used, the consensus score sheets and any other material relating to the evaluation process must be turned in to the procurement officer.

Step Nine: *Review.* The procurement officer will review the committee scoring and justification. If in agreement with the committee decision, the procurement officer will: (1) issue a Request for Documents Notice to the highest scoring offeror and notify other offerors of the tentative contract

award, (2) obtain the required insurance documents and contract security, and (3) issue a purchase order or contract, as appropriate. If a formal contract is required by the agency, a signed copy must be forwarded to the procurement officer for final review and signature. A copy of the fully executed contract will be returned to the agency and one copy will be retained for the procurement officer's RFP file. This completes the RFP process.